

Prayer for Peace, Hope and Justice

I have asked that we delay lighting the candle because I want to invite us all to take some time to consider the starkness of the candle without its flame of hope. I wonder what rises up within us? Is it indignation that this is not the right thing to do...to remove hope from the prayer candle? Or does it take us to the edge of the utter despair that so many people in the world are living in? Can we stop in our tracks, and, as Arundhati Roy implores us, not look away? Can we take some time to listen to what we see on the faces...

*of mothers and grandmothers as they watch children, babies, starve in a world of plenty?

*of raped women, raped children staring out of empty eyes into a world of violent disregard for their humanity?

*of homeless people facing another day of rejection, grime and slog?

*of those devastated by war...all they had bombed away heartlessly?

*of those forced to fight in wars that will haunt their dreams for years to come?

* of those watching horrified as floods tear apart their homes?

Can we look into their faces?

Let us pray

Jesus, we often come to this day, this remembering you on the cross, in the light of your resurrection. But this morning we are taking time to hear you identifying with the many that are today feeling the deep pain of the barbed wire that surrounds our peace and justice candle. In your desperate cry "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" you make space for feelings of loneliness, despair, hopelessness and anger that ravage the world at this time.

We do not come to this space as innocent bystanders, but rather as those who are complicit in our doing and complacent in our not doing. We come to this space sickened by our own lack of humanity...a humanity that you invited us into over and over in your lived-out ways and in your teachings. We, too, have forsaken, not only you on the cross, but so many others as well. Forgive us, O God, for we have known what we are doing.

And so, Jesus, we find ourselves wondering what is it that invites us to light the candle? Is it because our tradition holds us to doing that? Is it our desire to hurry on and get back to the comfort of the flame? Or is it our hope and, to go even deeper, our trust, that who you are, your very nature, provides the only hope of bringing peace and justice to this world? As we look into the faces around us that daily mirror the barbed wire, can we dare to put that trust into action and die to that which brings death in so many horrible and horrific ways? And can we light the candle to commit, even in our very brokenness, to a dying that is full of living...living a trust in you and your loving that will keep the flame alive in us this morning and in the days to come? And maybe, just maybe, it will allow us to carry those faces within us so we, in following you, might somehow become a beneficial presence to them and those who live the pain in this world. Can we follow you in praying with deep trust, that it is "into your hands", your nature and your ways, that we "commit our spirits" no matter what? Can we light this candle to proclaim to the corrupt powers and denialist principalities that its flame holds the deeper truth?

We pray so. (Light candle)